

Leo X

Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici, 1475–1521) was pope of the Roman Catholic Church from 1513–21. Born the son of Lorenzo de' Medici ("il magnifico"), Giovanni was educated by well-known Florentine Humanists, including Angelo Poliziano and Marsilio Ficino. In 1483, he embarked on a clerical career, which brought him rich benefices across Italy. In 1489, Pope Innocent VIII, whose son Franceschetto Cybo had in 1488 married Giovanni's sister Maddalena (1473–1519), created him cardinal. Giovanni remained deeply embroiled in the family politics of the Medici; his education, his love of art, and his conciliatory and mediating character also made him an ambassador for the family in Rome.

After the death of Pope Julius II in February 1513, Giovanni de' Medici was elected pope. Julius II's pontificate had been shaped by frequent political, military, and inner-ecclesiastical conflicts, and many contemporaries hoped that the new pope would introduce a "golden age" of peace, education, art, and church reform. After a promising beginning, however, Leo X proved able to fulfill only a small part of these hopes, for the curia remained unreformed, and the Pope made the interests of his family a key aspect of his politics.

Leo X must nonetheless be recognized as a supporter of the arts and sciences. He appointed notable scholars, including Tommaso de Vio (Cajetan) and Adriaan Floriszoon Boeyens (later Hadrian VI), to the College of Cardinals; employed others, such as Pietro Bembo and Jacopo Sadoletto, as secretaries; and expanded the Vatican library. However, he seems scarcely to have appreciated or understood the theological dimensions of the conflict with Martin Luther, whom he excommunicated in 1521.

The teaching documents of Leo X show no trace of any deeper engagement with Scripture or with biblical theology. Nonetheless, he functioned as patron and sponsor for many humanists engaged in biblical scholarship: Erasmus of Rotterdam and the Hebraists Felice da Prato, Antonio Giustiniani, Santi Pagnini and Agazio Guidacerio, who dedicated many of their works to Leo X. Leo X and Emperor Maximilian I awarded Erasmus of Rotterdam a privilege which held up the publication of the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible* for several years. Leo X's support for the "biblical Humanists" was multi-faceted. He supplied them with manuscripts from the Vatican library, issued publishing privileges and financial support, and defended them against their opponents in the theological faculties of Louvain and Paris where the humanists' approach to biblical interpretation was viewed as a threat to the church's doctrine and structures. However, despite this support of individual scholars and their work, Leo X – like other 16th-century popes – did not create any sustainable structures for the institutional or financial support of biblical scholarship.

Bibliography: ■ Grendler, P., "Italian Biblical Humanism and the Papacy, 1515–1535," in *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (ed. E. Rummel; Brill's Companion to the Christian Tradition 9; Leiden 2008) 227–76. ■ Pellegrini, M., "Leone X, Papa," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 64 (Rome 2005) 513–23.

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See also → Neo-Thomism